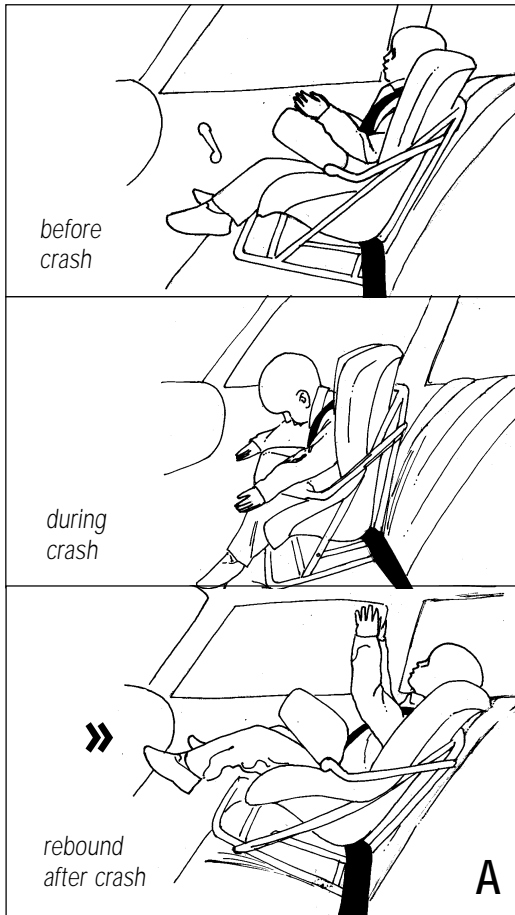
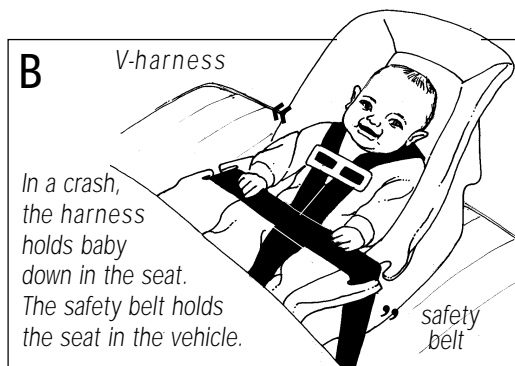


Tip #7

harness straps: your child's link to safety



Harness straps hold your child in his safety seat in a crash.



In a crash, the harness holds baby down in the seat. The safety belt holds the seat in the vehicle.

C. A metal slide is used on many infant-only seats and older convertible models to adjust the harness. It may be found in back or front, or on the side of the base.

The harness holds your child in his seat to protect him in a crash (A). Some safety seats have just a harness; others have a harness attached to a shield. A harness is no less safe than a harness and shield combination.

Four Facts about the Harness:

1. The straps must fit on strong parts of the body: the shoulders and hips.
2. The harness must be adjusted for a snug fit.
3. Rear-facing seats: The straps must be at or below the baby's shoulders.
4. Forward-facing seats: The straps of most models must be in the top-most slots. They pass over a strong support in the framework of the shell. Leaving them in the lower slots could be dangerous in a crash. Read manufacturer's instructions for your seat, as some models are constructed differently.

Using Rear-Facing Safety Seats

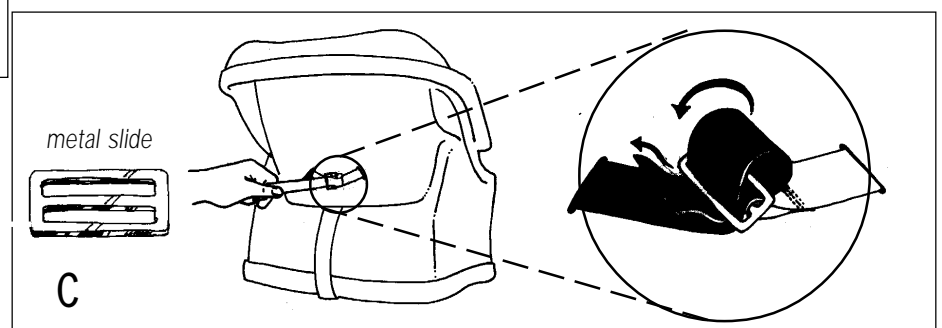
Infants ride facing rearward until they are one year old and weigh at least 20 pounds. A snug harness is important in this position. In a crash, the shoulder straps hold your baby down in the safety seat.

Infant-only seats usually have just two straps which go over the shoulders and form a "V" when buckled (B). There may be one or two sets of harness slots. Shoulder straps should be in the lowest slots for the newborn. Straps should be at or below shoulder level.

Use a harness retainer clip to keep straps on your baby's shoulders. Put the clip at mid-chest, armpit level.

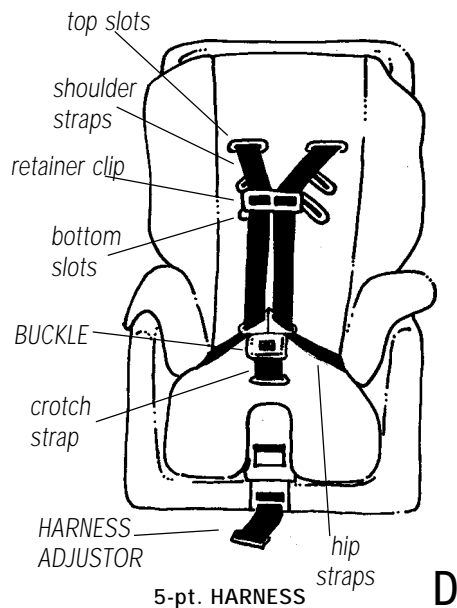
WARNING: When adjusting harnesses or changing strap positions, take extra care! A metal slide (C) may be used to shorten or lengthen the straps. The end of the strap must be threaded up and down through the openings, then back through the first opening to "lock" it (C). If the strap is not locked, the violent force of a crash could pull it out of the slide and allow your child to be thrown out of the seat.

For tips on using convertible safety seats, turn this sheet **over...**



Strap with metal slide must be threaded back through the slide to hold tight.

Convertible Seat



This convertible seat has a full harness to hold your child securely.



The harness on this convertible seat is tightened by pulling on the strap between the child's feet.

Using Forward-Facing Child Safety Seats

Some safety seats for use by children over age one and 20 pounds are "convertibles" that also can be used by babies facing the rear. Other models are for use facing forward only. These may have different minimum and maximum weight limits. Check the instructions for each model.

If your child's seat is a convertible model, two adjustments must be made for use facing forward.

1. Put the seat in the upright position, which gives the best protection for a forward-facing child. The reclined position used for a rear-facing infant does not protect well when used facing forward.
2. The shoulder straps must be moved up to the top set of slots (D). These are reinforced to withstand the force of a crash. If a convertible seat has a middle set of slots, they must not be used in the forward-facing position unless the instructions allow it.

Forward-facing models that are not convertibles also may have several sets of strap slots. You can choose the ones that fit your child best. Move the straps up when your child's shoulders reach the level of the slots.

When moving the straps up, be sure to thread them completely through the shell, not just behind the pad. Straps on older seats must go over or around a metal bar on the frame, so check the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

Harness straps are adjusted in different ways. Some tighten automatically to fit the child. Others have a dial to turn on the side or a strap to pull in the front (E). A few have a metal adjustment slide like the one pictured for the infant-only seat (C). The strap must be doubled back over the slide to prevent the harness from coming loose in a crash (C, see page 1).

If there is an **adjustable crotch strap**, keep it as short as possible to hold the hip straps or shield down low.

Put the **shoulder strap retainer clip (chest clip)** at armpit level to hold the straps in place.

The way you install and use a safety seat makes a big difference in a crash! If the harness is loose, your child could be thrown out in a crash.